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At Abington High Schools' North Campus, Abington, Pennsylvania, beginning French and Spanish students were grouped according to ability after the first marking period in an effort to meet their individual needs. A summary of the project shows that the grades of ability-grouped students tended to improve and that there is no clear correspondence between ability and pace. Recommendations include a study of the possibility of summer language courses to close the gap between ability groups, a review of pacing and grading problems, and a continuing of the program. Ten tables are included to compare grouped and ungrouped classes in grades and progress. (See related document FL 000 882.) (AF)

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# AN INTERIM REPORT ON A CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM IN FRENCH I AND SPANISH I

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This is the second report on a continuous progress program at North Campus in French I and Spanish I.

We wish to express our appreciation to the language teachers concerned for the data and information supplied by them, and also to acknowledge the assistance of Pauline Edwards, Research Coordinator in compilation and analysis of the data.

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# THE PROBLEM

To date, there is not available any reliable predictor of possible student initial success in the study of a foreign language.

In an effort to better meet the needs of the individual students, the foreign language department and the North Campus administration gave much thought and study, during the school year 1965-1966, to the question of of reducing failure and improving coordination in foreign language. As an outcome of this study and discussion, it was decided to begin a continuous progress program in the North Campus school in grades nine and ten.

To facilitate continuous progress (i.e. enabling the student to proceed at his own pace), special attention was given to the master schedule. Four French teachers were scheduled with seven French I classes during the same modules; Spanish I classes were similarly scheduled. Since the students scheduled for these classes, for the most part, had had no previous language experience, no attempt was made initially to sort them out by ability.

## METHODOLOGY - DATA COLLECTION

### Preliminary activity

Several meetings were held with the department members to discuss the program, explain its objectives, and to reach an agreement about procedures. The teachers then fully and candidly explained the program and its purposes to the students. Questions by parents, about the program were to be handled individually when they arose.

### Experimental sample

The experimental sample consisted of all ninth and tenth grade students beginning French or Spanish. (Note: In general it appears that students who begin a foreign language in ninth or tenth grade are less able to grasp the language than those who begin in grade seven.)

### Procedure for insuring continuous progress

The classes began this school year with students arbitrarily assigned to class groups. At the end of the first marking period the teachers involved assigned students to one of three ability groups, based on department-made achievement tests and demonstrated evidence of language learning ability:

Group 1 - show good language learning ability

Group 2 - show average language learning ability

Group 3 - show less-than-average language learning ability

At the end of the first marking period when the reassignments were massive, the explanations were presented to the entire class. At the end of the second marking period when the groups were refined still further, individual conferences were held to notify the students of the reassignment.

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

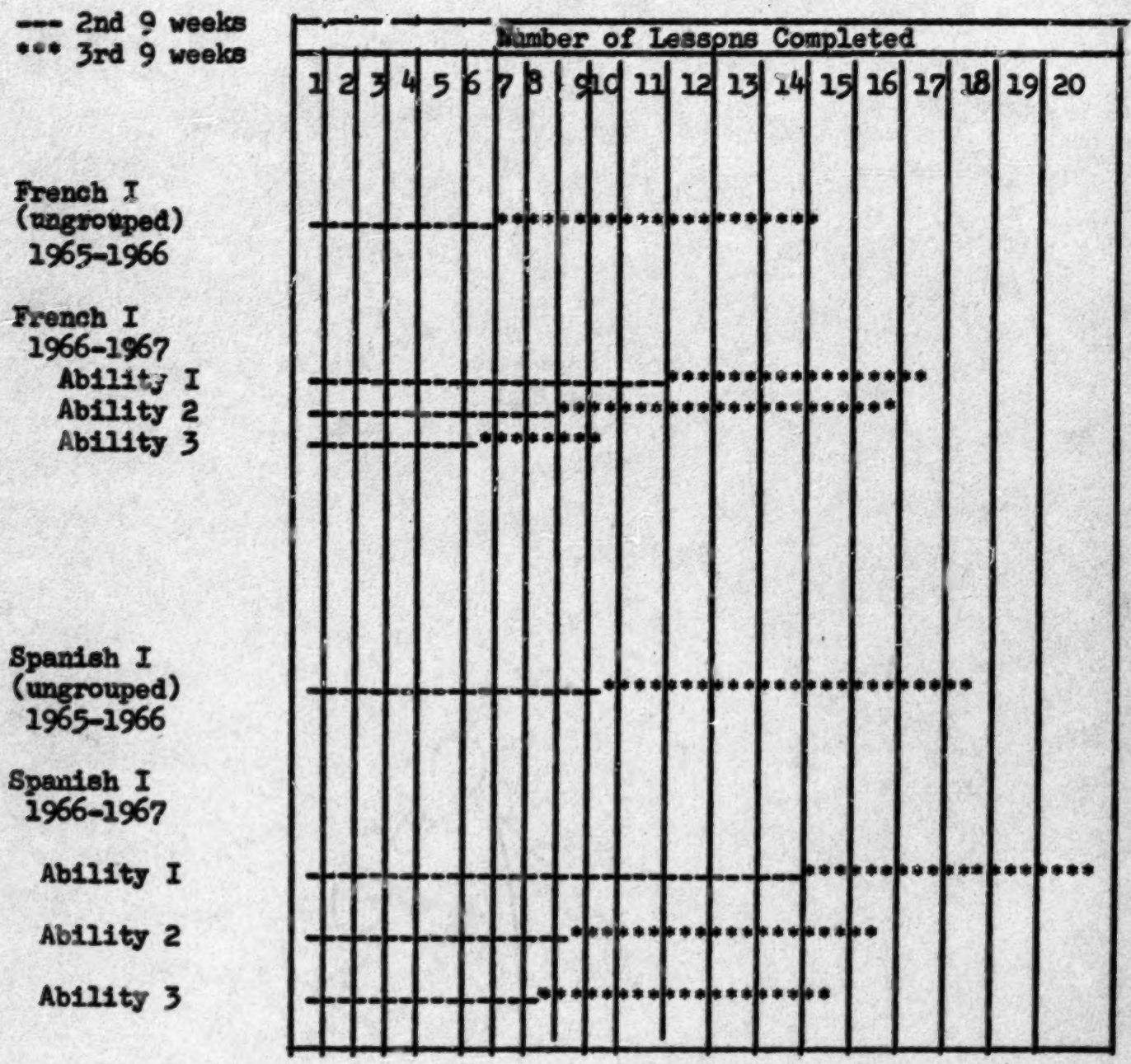
From the March 1967 report on the continuous progress program we found that four percent of the French students and seven percent of the Spanish students were reassigned at the end of the second nine weeks. About two-thirds of these reassignments were to lower ability groups. The conclusion at that time was that in general student performance and teacher judgment remained rather consistent during the second nine weeks, and when refinements were needed, they generally were made in a downward direction.

After the first two marking period readjustments of students in the continuous progress program, it was agreed to allow the students to remain in their respectively assigned ability groups.

This report, then, compares the progress of the ability grouped classes with that of last year's ungrouped classes at the end of the third marking period. The report includes lessons covered and comparitive distribution of grades.

TABLE I

RELATIVE LESSON PROGRESS OF 1966-1967 ABILITY GROUPED CLASSES AND 1965-1966 UNGROUPED CLASSES OF FRENCH I AND SPANISH I STUDENTS


--- 2nd 9 weeks
*** 3rd 9 weeks
Number of Lessons Completed
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
French I (ungrouped) 1965-1966
French I 1966-1967
Ability I
Ability 2
Ability 3
Spanish I (ungrouped) 1965-1966
Spanish I 1966-1967
Ability I
Ability 2
Ability 3

Analysis of TABLE I

It would seem from the table that ability grouping allowed the better students to move ahead of the French and Spanish ungrouped classes. The average or ability 2 students in French covered one lesson more than the ungrouped class. The ability 3 groups were paced more slowly, both groups remaining three lessons back of their ungrouped classes.

## TABLE II - VIII

## COMPARISON OF REPORT CARD GRADES OF 1966-1967 ABILITY GROUPED CLASSES WITH THOSE OF THE 1965-1966 UNGROUPED CLASSES OF FRENCH AND SPANISH I STUDENTS

| TABLE II | Percent of students earning "A" | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 |
| Marking Period | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| French I | 6% | 11% | 7% | 11% | 8% | 9% |
| Spanish I | 7% | 9% | 5% | 10% | 7% | 4% |

In each marking period in Table II except one the ability grouped students showed an increase in the percent earning "A"

| TABLE III | Percent of students earning "B" | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 |
| Marking Period | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| French I | 36% | 23% | 20% | 23% | 19% | 19% |
| Spanish I | 16% | 27% | 11% | 28% | 14% | 17% |

In each marking period in Table III except one the ability grouped students showed an increase in the percent earning "B", Spanish showing the greater increase.

| TABLE IV | Percent of students earning "C" | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 |
| Marking Period | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| French I | 44% | 37% | 27% | 37% | 28% | 35% |
| Spanish I | 38% | 27% | 27% | 32% | 26% | 37% |

Marking periods 2 and 3 show a decided increase in the percent of students earning "C" after being regrouped, as shown in Table IV.

| TABLE V | Percent of students earning "D" | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 |
| Marking Period | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| French I | 13% | 17% | 30% | 22% | 22% | 28% |
| Spanish I | 26% | 33% | 30% | 24% | 19% | 31% |

By the 3rd marking period, Table V shows the percent of the ability grouped students earning "D" was greater than that of the ungrouped with Spanish showing the greatest increase.

| TABLE VI | Percent of students earning "F" | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 |
| Marking Period | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| French I | 1% | 6% | 16% | 4% | 22% | 9% |
| Spanish I | 15% | 6% | 27% | 3% | 32% | 11% |

Table VI shows a decided drop in the percentage of students receiving "F" after ability grouping.

| TABLE VII | Total Percent of students earning "A", "B", and "C" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | French I | | Spanish I | |
| Year | 65/66 | 66/67 | 65/66 | 66/67 |
| 1st mp. | 86% | 71% | 61% | 63% |
| 2nd mp. | 54% | 71% | 43% | 70% |
| 3rd mp. | 56% | 63% | 46% | 58% |

An increase in the percent of students earning A, B, and C in all marking periods after ability grouping is shown in Table VII.

TABLE VIII

| Total percent of students earning "D" and "F" | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | French I | | | Spanish I | |
| Year | 65/66 | 66/67 | | 65/66 | 66/67 |
| 1st mp. | 14% | 23% | 1st mp. | 41% | 39% |
| 2nd mp. | 46% | 26% | 2nd mp. | 57% | 27% |
| 3rd mp. | 44% | 37% | 3rd mp. | 54% | 42% |

A decrease in the percent of students earning "D" and "F" after ability grouping is hown by Table VIII

In analyzing the evidence revealed in the preceding tables, one finds that the total percent of students in Spanish I earning "A's", "B's", and "C's" increased an average of approximately 19%. Further analysis reveals that the total percent of the regrouped French I students increased an average of approximately 12% per marking period.

The tables also revealed that in French I the average decrease in the percent of "D's" and "F's" after the classes were regrouped, was approximately 14%, while the percent of "D's" and "F's" in the Spanish I ability grouped classes showed an average decrease per marking period of approximately 21%.

## TABLES IX & X

## NUMBER OF STUDENTS FROM CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM ENTERING SOUTH CAMPUS PROGRAM

TABLE IX

| Subj. 66-67 | Grade and/or Ab. Grp. | Total No. of Students | Total No. Elect. to Continue | Lesson at Present | Proj. Lesson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| French I | 10-1 | 11 | 11 | 16 | 29 |
| | 10-2 | 31 | 31 | 15 | 23 |
| | 10-3 | 18 | 16 | 9 | 16 |
| | Total | 65 | 58 | | |

TABLE X

| Subj. 66-67 | Grade and/or Ab. Grp. | Total No. of Students | Total No. Elect. to Continue | Lesson at Present | Proj. Lesson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spanish I | 10-1 | 22 | 22 | 20 | 31 |
| | 10-2 | 23 | 19 | 15 | 22 |
| | 10-3 | 20 | 17 | 14 | 19 |
| | Total | 65 | 58 | | |

Analysis of Tables IX & X: At the start of next school year, South Campus will have 58 French II students at three rather distinct levels of achievement; they will have 58 Spanish II students with similar disparities in progress and achievement.

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary and Conclusions:

1. Grouping placements remain rather stable after the first placement. When reassignments are made, they tend to be made in a downward direction.

2. There was no clear correspondence between ability and pace. The following examples are noted:

   a. During report period three, Ability 2 students in French I covered 7 lessons and Ability 1 students, 6 lessons.

   b. During report period three, Ability 3 students in Spanish I covered 7 lessons and Ability I students 7 lessons, while Ability 2 students covered 6 lessons.

   c. By the end of the third report period, Ability I and Ability 2 students in general had made more progress than had last year's ungrouped students.

3. Grouping had the effect of decreasing to some extent the number of "D's" and "F's". There was a substantial decrease in the number of F's during second and third report period. There was a substantial decrease in the number of D's during second report period but an increase in the number of D's during third report period.

4. The continuous progress system will present some grouping problems at South Campus. The seriousness of the problem will depend somewhat on South Campus students taking French II and the progress they made in French I.

## Recommendations:

1. We recommend that Miss Helen Black study the enrollments in French II by ability group and arrange grouping so that it best meets the needs of the students and makes best utilization of staff.

2. We recommend that Miss Helen Black with the language teachers study the possibliities of a summer language course which would permit students to close the gap between ability groups.

3. We recommend that Mr. Alan Quay make a final study of pace and grades at the end of this school year.

4. We recommend that Dr. Ferderbar meet with the language teachers to review with them the pacing and grading problems revealed here.

5. We recommend that the program be continued next year.